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Review: Harsh Reality vs. Flatulent Talk

(Mar. Ascoli: Editorial in
The Reporter.)

THE BATTLE for Cuba lasted less than seventy-two hours, the generals' revolt in Algeria less than four days. It is as if the wheels of history had been made to turn with the speed and efficiency of an IBM machine; once a minimum of effort is exerted, the results unfold themselves in massive fullness and at a pace immeasurably beyond that of the human mind.

The making of history has become an astonishingly inexpensive business.

OUR MINDS must counter-check the results, undertake the sustained, painful effort of reconstructing what has happened and why it has happened.

Inevitably, the mind must proceed slowly and inch its way toward tentative conclusions. It is all too easy now to pillory the CIA, the Cuban exiles, or Mr. Kennedy.

Unquestionably, Fidel Castro is an enemy of ours who is waging a mean, treacherous war on the befuddled Cuban people.

The ban on war as a means for bringing about changes in the international community or in the internal order of nations, the rule of no-force imposed by the fact that any substantial use of force may unleash ultimate destruction, all this plays into the hands of those rulers who do not derive their internal power from the consent of the peoples they rule.

The Communists have their own way of circumventing

the rule of no-force, and Khrushchev himself has bragged about his support of violent anti-western insurrections.

WE, on the contrary, are mostly concerned with the wars we cannot wage. We like to talk about limited wars to be fought short of total holocaust.

We talk of fomenting or bootlegging revolutions in some of the dictator-ruled countries that happen to be considered the most obnoxious, and when we do something in this direction we magnify whatever we do by talking and talking. We also talk a great deal about peace and international order and world law.

IN FACT we love nothing better than to limit our freedom of action with as many bonds as possible, through the United Nations or the Organization of American States.

We neglect no chance for testifying to our belief in the sovereign equality of nations by welcoming with all our heart any newcomers.

Yet somehow we have to defend our existence. It is not enough to be always on the side of world order, considering that we are faced by an enemy undeviatingly determined to extend disorder wherever he is likely to gain from it. It is not enough to uphold our belief in world law when such law is still very far from being formulated, not to say enforceable.

AS A substitute for action, our government has lately been following the policy of letting others act for us.

We act vicariously.

We cannot be neutral in the struggle for ultimate power, but we have adopted the habit of encouraging neutrality in other nations, for in anything that is called neutrality—even in Laos—we like to find a guaranty that our enemy has not yet taken over.

TOWARD FIDEL Castro, too, we have taken action, but vicariously. After months of noisy meditation and open conspiracy, a contingent of Cuban exiles, armed and trained by us, has acted for us.

The result is known and the shame is ours.

The President has not shunned responsibility. In his speech to the newspaper editors he gave a striking illustration of the inadequacies in our nation's policies.

He hinted at the possibility that our country might go it alone in a war against Cuba, and his hint has made it extremely unlikely, if not impossible, that our nation will ever engage in such a war.

He recognized the multiple nature of the Communist offensive and the need to counteract its most redoubtable means, which is subversion.

BUT HE did all this after the failure of our major and most publicized attempt at subversion.

He has emphasized his responsibility for everything that was done or not done. Undoubtedly there was a quality of generosity in his

taking on the full burden for what had happened.

But this cannot hide the fact that in circumventing the no-force rule we have once more been proved less than amateurs, and that whenever we make a try at this game we have no allies.

THE SHOCK of the general's rebellion in France was, if possible, even more shocking than the Cuban attack.

For some nightmarish hours it was like reliving the fall of France in June, 1940.

This time it would have been the fall of the western coalition.

When de Gaulle made his speech to the French people, perhaps he felt as lonely as when in 1940 he made his first broadcast over the BBC.

With lightning determination, de Gaulle crushed the revolt of the same generals who three years ago helped him to power. He is a man who throughout his long, momentous life has never stopped growing.

He is now a soldier-statesman who has come to recognize the obsolescence of militarism, of war, and of colonialism.

IT IS good to know that at the end of this month the two Presidents, the old man and the young man, will meet.

Tried as they have been by the latest events, they must know how much they depend on each other.

If they succeed in pooling their wisdom and their power, the three days they spend together will decide the destiny of years to come.